



April 7, 2021

House Taxes Committee

RE: HF 991 (Omnibus Tax Bill)

Dear Chair Marquart and Committee Members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 60 organizations working to reduce youth tobacco use and end tobacco's harm for good. We are united behind policies that reduce youth smoking and nicotine addiction. **Our coalition enthusiastically supports the tobacco prevention elements in HF 991.**

Thank you for taking important steps to reverse the youth tobacco epidemic and address tobacco-related health disparities. Specifically, thank you for including the cigarette tax dedication to tobacco prevention and treatment that was in Representative Morrison's bill (HF 572). This investment will save lives and reduce youth addiction. We also support the inclusion of the Governor's language that closes the tax loophole on e-cigarette devices and ensures online, out-of-state retailers are responsible for the same tobacco taxes as Minnesota retailers.

For more than two decades ClearWay Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>, the foundation created with 3 percent of the tobacco settlement, has provided the majority of funding for tobacco prevention in Minnesota. These investments have paid off. Over the past 20 years, tobacco control investments prevented 4,560 cancers, 31,691 hospitalizations for cardiovascular disease and diabetes, 12,881 respiratory disease hospitalizations and 4,118 deaths. \$5.1 billion was also saved in worker productivity and health care costs.

If Minnesota invests in tobacco control at the same or greater levels over the next 20 years, the state will prevent an additional 14,063 smoking-attributable deaths, reduce smoking-attributable medical spending by \$10.2 billion and increase paid and unpaid productivity by \$9.4 billion.

Investing in tobacco prevention and treatment is an important step and there is ample tobacco revenue collected by the state. Just last week, two tobacco companies paid Minnesota \$81 million in settlement back payments – and those companies will pay at least \$10 million a year going forward. Those payments are on top of the nearly \$760 million Minnesota collected last year in tobacco revenue (\$607 million in taxes and \$152 million in settlement fees). Minnesota spent only one percent of that total on tobacco prevention and treatment.

The state should continue investing in sustainable, proven strategies to reduce youth tobacco use and help smokers quit. Dedicating \$15 million of cigarette tax revenue to prevention and treatment is a common-sense way to address concerning youth tobacco use and declining state resources. This approach is popular among Minnesota residents – a 2020 poll found that 64 percent of Minnesotans support increasing state funding for youth tobacco prevention by \$15 million a year.

Minnesota should continue our prevention and treatment investments until Big Tobacco no longer targets and harms Black, Indigenous and LGBTQ residents. And we should carry on these efforts until the industry no longer views our kids as "replacement smokers." As these programs continue to save dollars and lives, we hope that in the future the Legislature will revisit the sunset provision in this bill.

**Minnesota is a stronger and healthier state when our kids grow up free from tobacco addiction.**

Sincerely,



Molly Moilanen  
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a  
Smoke-Free Generation  
Vice President, ClearWay Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>



Janelle Waldock  
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a  
Smoke-Free Generation  
Senior Director of Policy, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of  
Minnesota

***About Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation***

*Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 60 organizations that share a common goal of saving Minnesota youth from a lifetime of addiction to tobacco. The coalition supports policies that reduce youth smoking and nicotine addiction, including increasing tobacco prices, raising the tobacco sale age to 21, limiting access to candy-, fruit- and menthol-flavored tobacco, and funding tobacco prevention and cessation programs.*

*Partners include: The African American Leadership Forum, Allina Health, Allina Health | Aetna, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Apple Tree Dental, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, Becker County Energized, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, Cancer Legal Care, CentraCare, Children’s Defense Fund-MN, Children’s Minnesota, ClearWay Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Education Minnesota, Essentia Health, Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare, A Healthier Southwest, HealthPartners, Hennepin Healthcare, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, ISAI AH, JustUs Health, LAAMPP Alumni, Lake Region Healthcare, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, LPCFC – Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, March of Dimes, Mayo Clinic, Medica, Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, MHA – Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Nurses Association, Minnesota Oral Health Coalition, Minnesota Public Health Association, MNAAP – Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, ModelCities, NAMI Minnesota, North Memorial Health, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Olmsted Medical Center, Open Cities Health Center, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health & Living, Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, ShiftMN, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, Twin Cities Medical Society, UCare, Vision In Living Life – Change is Possible, WellShare International and Zumbro Valley Medical Society. Find out more at: [smokefreegenmn.org](http://smokefreegenmn.org).*